Spanish Mood Selection:
Probablemente Subjunctive, Posiblemente Indicative
Spanish Mood Selection

According to Spanish textbooks:

- Subjunctive = doubt, indicative = reality/certainty
- Es probable que/es posible que:
  - Always subjunctive because they express doubt

- However, the corresponding adverbial clauses probablemente and posiblemente are rarely studied in elementary/intermediate Spanish classes.

- Are they any different?
Goal of the investigation:

- Evaluation of mood selection in a number of matrices used to express doubt:
  - Ser posible que
  - Ser probable que
  - Posiblemente
  - Probablemente
  - Seguramente

- 100-200 examples of each matrix from oral interviews in the Corpus del Español (Brigham Young University) were analyzed.

- Are these matrices always used with subjunctive?
Ser posible que

- Only 1 example used indicative of the 125 sentences studied.

- Indicative: “Es posible que está haciendo berrinches porque el papá y la mamá no se hablan…”
Ser probable que

- Of 221 examples, only 3 used indicative.

- Indicative: “Es probable que el medio campo no le siente bien…”
Seguramente

- Of 265 examples, only 8 used subjunctive.

- Indicative: “Seguramente vamos a ir…”

- Subjunctive: “Seguramente nos pase lo que pasó en Coahuila.”
Of 115 examples found in the Corpus, indicative is actually more common than subjunctive!
What do more advanced Spanish grammar books say?

- According to Butt and Benjamin’s *A New Reference Grammar of Modern Spanish*:
  
  - **Posiblemente/Probablemente:**
    - Subjunctive is optional if the event is happening in the present or already happened in the past
    - For future events, subjunctive or future indicative are used
    - Use of subjunctive makes the possibility weaker
Impact of Verb Tense on Mood Selection

- Is there a difference in mood selection depending on past or present tense?

- Divided all the examples into 2 categories:
  1. Future reference- sentence refers to events that have not occurred yet
  2. Past/present reference- sentence refers to events that are occurring or have already occurred
According to Butt and Benjamin, use of subjunctive is optional.

Indicative was used in the majority of examples, but use of subjunctive was not uncommon.

**Posiblemente (80 cases)**
- Indicative: 35%
- Subjunctive: 65%

**Probablemente (75 cases)**
- Indicative: 32%
- Subjunctive: 68%
Past/Present Reference Clauses

- Indicative:
  “Ahora *posiblemente* yo *soy* más conservadora en cierto sentido.”

- Subjunctive:
  “Ella dice en la cadera, pero *probablemente sea* en la región glútea.”
According to Butt and Benjamin, only subjunctive or future tense should be used.

Actually, there are a number of examples where indicative is used!

**Posiblemente (25 cases)**
- Indicative: 32%
- Subjunctive: 28%
- Future/Conditional: 40%

**Probablemente (41 cases)**
- Indicative: 5%
- Subjunctive: 46%
- Future/Conditional: 49%
Future Reference Clauses

- Future: “Por todo esto, **posiblemente** su trabajo **reflejará** para siempre la esencia misma del París eterno.”

- Subjunctive: “…**probablemente** **pudiéramos** tener ya un esbozo mañana…”

- Indicative: “**Probablemente** después de misa **se viene** a cocinar.”
Conclusions:

- *Probablemente* and *posiblemente* do not behave like the related nominal clauses *es posible que* and *es probable que*.

  It is actually more common to find these matrixes used with the indicative mood!

- *Probablemente* subjunctive, *posiblemente* indicative?
  Spanish mood selection is much more complicated than the simple classifications of doubt or certainty.

- How does mood selection change the meaning of the sentence? We *probablemente* need to take another look!